TUG OF WAR

Paul McCartney talks to Andy Mackay

Andy I listened to the album yesterday. I listened to it straight through three times, which is more like colliding with it than listening to it, but it sounds incredible and I think it has the sound of a classic to me. The reactions must be pretty good for the privileged few.

Paul I must say, yeah, the reaction is good.

Andy But one thing that struck me about it is obviously that there is a concept or a theme or a thread running through it that holds it together, and I wonder how much that was anything that consciously affected the way you were working. I know you have the general concept of a tug of war, and ebony and ivory — the idea of opposites and so on. Did that affect the material in between?

Paul I think it affected more how we approached the recording. The actual writing of the songs mostly was done before we started recording, and the songs that were written afterwards weren't particularly written with the concept in mind, but as Dave Mattacks says, it is more of a "bondcept" album. We knew that we were kinda going for a certain sound, and we were using a very broad theme, a kinda tug of war thing, so that made us think of pictures and stuff, of everything that we were recording, and sounds we were putting down for the effect they'd have, so that we could always look to the concept to see which way we were going. The writing, actually, was done more on just individual little things, you know, like that such-and-such a song would be done because of such-and-such a mood, not necessarily relevant to the so-called concept thing.

Andy I know you were working on material for two albums, I mean that you are still working on a second album. Was the material for 'Tug of War' simply that which was ready, sort of fell into place, or did you try and consciously finish off that set of songs?

Paul There's a little bit of both there. It had a bunch of stuff that was ready, as you nearly always do for an album. You've got a few songs you've been working on, you're waiting to record, and in the middle of them was this song called "Tug of War", and as that had started by me liking the title and the idea, and seeing that it applied to more than just a sport, I did the song and started just to kind of plonk that in amongst these others that were, you know, ready to go anyway. Any lyrics I had to finish up a little bit would be governed by the new idea of a theme, so I didn't really want to get too hung up on a theme, 'cos it's like everything regimented, and nothing flowing, and I wouldn't have wanted that really, 'cos I like the idea of a little bit of regimentation but a lot of stuff that was just kind of free-flying amongst it all. That's why I kind of say this is a sort of loose concept, sort of starts with a concept, flows into some stuff that you could vaguely say was in the concept, but it starts sort of free-flowing all over the place. But eventually, by the time it gets to the end of the album, it sort of returns to the concept. So you know it's just like a very loose one.

Andy Obviously one is reminded of 'Sergeant Pepper' in that that was the first really big concept album. Was that put together as a concept?

Paul No, that was the thing about that, it really wasn't. The thing that made that a concept thing was the period, the fashions of the period, you know. What was going on was very much one kind of thing, like the psychedelic bit, which made it seem like a concept. Everything that we were doing, all the songs we were doing, the general direction of them, was crazy as opposed to straight. I mean the bad words — both of them to sum them up — you know what I mean, and it was really just a collection of songs but, because of the fashions of the period, you'd be taking songs off a wall-poster rather than out of, let's say, kind of a love experience or a tiff experience, as you might have done a few years before.

Andy Right. There is also a very strong English quality about 'Sergeant Pepper', English-y references to fairgrounds, and the sounds made on this album, although you have used various American superstar musicians and other people, the overall quality is very English to me, which I like very much. It's something I associate very much with your writing and the way you work on records. That's nothing particularly conscious, I imagine, it's just the way. . .

Paul No, I think that's just me and George marking aim together, both of us are very English; we live here, and you know, you wouldn't exactly sort of say George is sort of a hip American style producer at all. You know he is not that way. . .

Andy Not exactly.

Paul . . . and my stuff doesn't lean in that direction really, so I suppose it's just that the combination of both of us makes it . . .

Andy In a way it's continuing the theme of contrast, because that works incredibly well on this record, the way you do get the really strong feel on "What's That You're Doing?"

Paul Yes.

Andy And then that sort of goes against the English-y tracks. The texture of the album is very interesting and it moves from very thick, rich, George Martin-y type arrangements and sounds, and very fascinating sounds which you can't really identify as any particular thing, through to acoustic guitar and voice, and I very much like the way it switches between them. Also I like the way the opening track does exactly that: it starts off with what seems to me, a kind of solo statement, and it's more or less your voice, and that's all you notice, and then before long, without really noticing it, you've got a lot of other textures and things coming in.

Paul Yeah, that's what I was saying before is what happens. The themes, rather than influencing the actual songs themselves, and the words which would have been a kind of regimented way to go, were all left to just sort of free-flow, but the ideas like you say, going from a funky track to a sort of very string-quartet-y track, that does sort of keep up the contrasts idea. That was why I liked the idea of tug of war, if we were going to bother with any kind of theme, because it's a theme that you can find in everything.

Andy So in this respect you obviously benefited from the absolute freedom that you had, of working on your own with whoever you wanted to work with, so that there's no need for it to ever sound like the group playing or like anything except the sounds that you want, which I think works very well for me. But just as a sort of side question, the second album of the material that you are still working on, will that tie up with 'Tug of War'?

Paul I think it will sort of tie up with 'Tug of War' really, because one of the tracks that we didn't put on the first album ties up with 'Tug of War', so probably that will be on the second one. There will be a kind of link through. I really don't know how that second one is going to turn out yet, but we are going to make it in the same way as we made the first one, which was to make everything up, and see what it all is. If stuff needs to be moved about, you know, then we'll do that.

Andy Is that a long way from completion?

Paul I don't know really. We were thinking of it being done within about a month or so, but you know how these things go, it may not be done, in which case it will be a long wait. But we are just finishing up the tracks. It's gone quite right.

Andy And that's using the same kind of textures?

Paul Some of them are the same kind of textures, but somebody asked me that actually, "Is the second one going to be like the first one?" At first when I thought about it I was going to say, "Yes, you know, it's going to be like more of the same", but actually the way it's working out, it's slightly different, because it's as if we have got the first album behind us and now we are sort of trying to do something that we didn't do on the first album, just out of natural wishing to slightly change, wishing not to continue the same thing.

Andy So it may be a bit different?

Paul Yes, I think there will be a whole lot of different set of textures, that's what it's turning out anyway.

Andy The most interesting, the one I like best actually, is "Wanderlust" which is my favourite track.

Paul Great.

Andy I love the way that works just with the drums and voice basically, and brass. I think it's very strong.

Paul That's Philip Jones' lads.

Andy Is it? I was going to ask about that; it sounds brilliant.

Paul I was thinking about it and George knew Philip Jones, and he brought in cassettes and this kind of thing . . . I had the idea for the sound, you know, sort of like Christmas-y brass, sort of Pickwick Dickensian sort of feel to it all, you know, like English really. Well that sounds to me like old Phil, so I got onto the blower, you know. . .

Andy And that showed the contrast between that and "Get It" is very strong.

Paul Silly, yes, isn't it? That was one of the ones when we had a rough running order and we plonked those next to each other — just sort of thinking maybe they'll go — and it was one of those you couldn't alter.

Andy It's something you quite like doing, I think, isn't it? In a way it's deflating a mood slightly because "Wanderlust" is a very intense song. I am not certain what it's about, and I was going to ask you about that, but I mean, it's an intense mood.

Paul It's nice in what it does, though. It just breaks out of it like some little bubble bursts, then off you go.

Andy It's very much like life, you know, that things are not so great . . .

Paul And suddenly the pictures switches to something completely different. It was a mistake really, *not* a mistake, a *fluke*, because we just plonked them in that order on a hunch, thinking that that might work, let's try it and see if it does, and it seemed to work.

Andy Is "Wanderlust" an emotional song?

Paul It's actually a personal experience. What happened was that we were recording (we went out to the Virgin Islands to record an album called 'London Town') and we were on boats, in a little bay recording for a month. The captain of the boat that we were on was a little, sort of, heavier than the other captains — you know, he sort of took it a little more seriously — and at some stage we had a sort of argument with him, and I sort of said, "You know, we don't need all this aggro stuff", and we wanted to get off onto this other boat that happened to be in the harbour. These people had said we could come on this, and this boat happened to be called "Wanderlust", so it became like a symbol of freedom to me, this catamaran, as it was, called "Wanderlust". We only actually stayed one night on it, but it was like, after this hassling that this other fellow had given us, to get onto this boat was like freedom, you know, so the song for me is actually just carrying on the idea. You know, just head us out to sea and take us away from all these headaches, and just wanderlust kind of free.

Andy Is that what you got out of it?

Paul Yeah, I got a thing of freedom but, I mean (it sounds intense) it was a mood, you know, it was a mood that, as I say, we'd had an argument and it was a feeling the way this particular fellow had been thinking, and the way I was thinking. I really thought he was being very oppressive. I'm sure he had his own side to the stuff, but for me it needed a touch of wanderlust in it.

Andy There must have been times in your life when you felt the need for freedom. I mean, I know when we talked before you were saying that you were never as badly pressured perhaps as people thought you were, by being in the Beatles, and being a famous face, but it must nevertheless have been something that certainly when you were touring things must have got difficult.

Paul It's one of those things, that if you'd probably gone to a psychiatrist and he probed deep he might have found that he was really getting to you. At the time on just a conscious level, I didn't feel like it was much of a pressure at all. There was always a lot to do, and you just kind of went out to look at the sights, and stuff, and what when you look at it baldly seems like huge pressure, wasn't. We were just kept moving from hotel rooms to hotel rooms, from stadium to stadium and so forth. In a way, I suppose you get equated with a doctor always being either in his surgery or in his car or in a patient's house. I always tended to look upon it as that, you know, it's just something we were doing. There was all that sort of craziness accompanying it, and there was never a dull moment really, even though it sounds pretty dull, just being in hotel rooms, but in the little microcosm or whatever it is you just create, little worlds — you know, down the corridor, in someone else's room — would become another little world, and you know, it didn't seem to be that pressurised. But I suppose, if you scraped the surface you might find it's — er - the strangeness of the situation, the strangeness that you were the four most famous people in the world in some ways, at that time.

No, it's funny, you know, the strangeness of that didn't often kinda strike you really. It think it's like, if you talk to Stalin's daughter: Did the hugeness or strangeness of being Stalin's daughter occur to her? She would probably say, "Yes", but mainly her life was involved in just growing up as a person. So for me, we had come from Liverpool and tried to get famous; here we were being famous. This is what fame is! This is the ball game. Obviously, the pressures were there from time to time, and it was always when the frustration was taken off, when it was lifted, those were moments of great relief. I remember some guy on tour called Ira who was with the GAC Agency in New York, and Ira was like our minder, you know, sort of looked after us, something to do with the agency, and a couple of old ladies kind of staring at us, you know, while we were sitting in a room somewhere, and he started, "This ain't no freak show, ladies, you know", and we said, "Yeah, you know". In moments like those we probably over-reacted the other way.

Andy Do you maybe see it more if you see someone else in any comparable situation, do you ever see . . .

Paul Yeah, sometimes I look at other people's things and think, "Well, you know, I've done all of that", and I can see what I think about him going through it, so I can see what people must have seen about me going through it, but what you're asking is me looking at it from my point of view is just like this: I mean, here you and I are sitting in a studio, with somebody through a plate glass window listening to the recording. It's a pretty strange sort of situation, but we both totally accept it, whereas somebody else would feel a great pressure here. I suppose you just sit down, and if you're a bit used to it, it's conditioning.

. . .The other thing about that is, I was gonna say, is with the Beatle thing. You tend to think an overnight success thing because that's what the kinda Vaudeville performers will have been putting around. But it wasn't really. We had minor success at first, then a little bit higher, a little bit higher — it is very stepped, the whole thing. If you think of it as like early days, nothing much at all. A little bit of Hamburg, then building up success step by step in Hamburg, then coming back to England and starting to build that same success over again at the Cavern. Then you'd start to kinda go on a ballroom circuit outside your town, and building that up, then building your reputation within this ballroom circuit. Then you gravitated to theatres, the theatrical circuits, you're building there, too, and these theatres lead to the West End and record success, which was then coming up and all of this was, you know, kinda leading to America. So by the time you got to the ultra craziness of America, in a way we kinda said, "This is nothing, you should have seen it back there at home!"

Andy Back to the album, I noticed that "Here Today", when listening to it, that track could either be about someone in particular or it could be about a situation that could happen to anyone. Is it about anyone in particular?

Paul Yeah, I wrote that particular song about John, but I quite like the way that it sort of translated to anyone, it could be about someone else, but in my case it was about John, yeah.

Andy I like it. It's got one beautiful line in it — "You're in my song", I can't quite remember it, "You're here today in my song". It's interesting. To go back to the top of the album, "Tug of War", not to make too much of a theme, but the sort of freedom and all those things, is that a complaint or a celebration with that song?

Paul A "Tug of War"?

Andy Are you relishing the tug of war?

Paul No, I think it is a complaint, basically, it's a complaint.

Andy It's not . . . sort of, the sporting aspect is lost in the struggle?

Paul I think, you know, with my songs, I have my own approach. I'll tell you the way I see it: the thing I like about my stuff, when I like it, is that the listener can take it the wrong way, it *may* apply to them, you know. Somebody will take the purely sport angle, somebody will take it very much from their angle — it could be about the divorce they've known or that they're in or something. In may case, it's about the fact that it isn't easy, things aren't easy; in an ideal world we could have requested an easier existence, please.

Andy "In a different world we could stand on top of the mountain with our flag unfurled."

Paul But, you know, in a way it's also kinda saying, but you know that can't be, for some reason.

Andy So that it applies to everyone, it's not . . .

Paul Well, it's not just a personal complaint, no I'm just me, as Everyman.

Andy Just like most artists, really. I mean, there's obviously no reason at all why you should answer any questions about what your songs are about, because the songs should be the statement, and obviously when you start talking about the particular meanings of something, without the music, without the context, it doesn't sound right.

I certainly noticed with Brian Ferry's songs that he expresses, reveals, far more of himself in songs than ever in a conversation, and he does it in a way that it's always surprising — a quite extraordinary amount of revealing things. That's particularly him. I know that that doesn't apply to you.

Paul But, you know, isn't that what a lot of stuff, this "so called art" is about, isn't it? You know that someone in a picture will be able to do something, express something you can't do. Yeah, I think I find it easy, I mean, the

THE FULL TUG OF WAR LINE UP!

SIDE ONE

Tug of War
Paul McCartney: acoustic guitar, bass, drums, electric guitar, synthesisers, vocal. *Campbell Maloney:* military snares. *Denny Laine:* electric guitar. *Eric Stewart:* electric guitar. *Backing vocals:* Paul McCartney, Linda McCartney, Eric Stewart. Orchestra led by Kenneth Sillito.

Take it Away
Paul McCartney: piano, bass, acoustic guitar, vocal. *Steve Gadd and Ringo Starr:* drums. *George Martin:* electric piano. *Backing vocals:* Paul McCartney, Linda McCartney, Eric Stewart.

Somebody Who Cares
Paul McCartney: acoustic guitar, Spanish guitar, vocal. *Stanley Clarke:* bass. *Steve Gadd:* drums, percussion. *Denny Laine:* guitar, synthesiser. *Adrian Brett:* pan pipes. *Backing vocals:* Linda McCartney, Paul McCartney, Eric Stewart.

What's That You're Doing?
Paul McCartney: bass, drums, electric guitar, vocals. *Stevie Wonder:* synthesisers, vocals. *Andy Mackay:* lyricon. *Backing vocals:* Paul McCartney, Linda McCartney, Eric Stewart.

Here Today
Paul McCartney: guitar, vocals. *Jack Rothstein:* violin. *Bernard Partridge:* violin. *Ian Jewel:* viola. *Keith Harvey:* cello.

SIDE TWO

Ballroom Dancing
Paul McCartney: piano, drums, bass, electric guitar, percussion, vocal. *Denny Laine:* electric guitar. *Jack Brymer;* clarinet gliss. *Backing vocals:* Linda McCartney, Paul McCartney, Eric Stewart. Narration by Peter Marshall.

The Pound is Sinking
Paul McCartney: acoustic guitar, electric guitar, synthesisers, vocal. *Stanley Clarke:* bass. *Denny Laine:* acoustic guitar. *Backing vocals:* Paul McCartney, Linda McCartney, Eric Stewart.

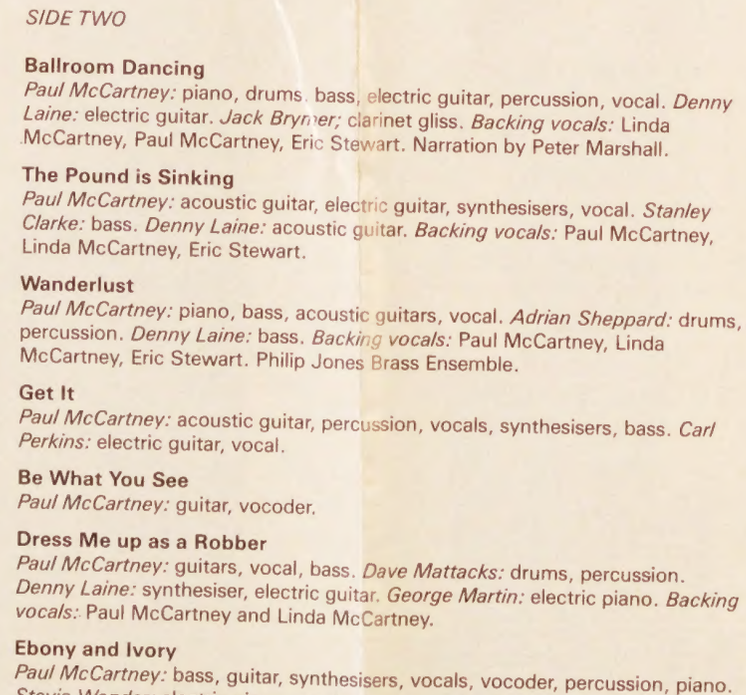
Wanderlust
Paul McCartney: piano, bass, acoustic guitars, vocal. *Adrian Sheppard:* drums, percussion. *Denny Laine:* bass. *Backing vocals:* Paul McCartney, Linda McCartney, Eric Stewart. Philip Jones Brass Ensemble.

Get It
Paul McCartney: acoustic guitar, percussion, vocals, synthesisers, bass. *Carl Perkins:* electric guitar, vocal.

Be What You See
Paul McCartney: guitar, vocoder.

Dress Me up as a Robber
Paul McCartney: guitars, vocal, bass. *Dave Mattacks:* drums, percussion. *Denny Laine:* synthesiser, electric guitar. *George Martin:* electric piano. *Backing vocals:* Paul McCartney and Linda McCartney.

Ebony and Ivory
Paul McCartney: bass, guitar, synthesisers, vocals, vocoder, percussion, piano. *Stevie Wonder:* electric piano, synthesisers, vocals, drums, percussion. *Backing vocals:* Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder.



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same way a lot of people have stutters but don't stutter when they sing a song. That always amazed me that, and I think it is the same way that you can have things said in a song. I mean, I would never have looked at John Lennon and kinda said, "I love you", because it wasn't about that, you know, it was nothing about that. But in a song, in the particular way they're written today, I kinda easily say, "I love you", almost as a throw-away, because it doesn't seem embarrassing in that context. I can always deny that it was ever written about him. Burn the tapes, and delete the . . .

Andy I can't ever write lyrics, I think, because of the same reason; I could only express things through playing, but I have never been able to get that extra thing of putting it into words as well, which I think is probably true of Mozart or someone who does the same thing — like he couldn't possibly express any other way.

Paul Oh yeah, you all have your particular little talents you know; some people would be able to draw it rather than talk it. I always think I am not that good with words.

Andy I wouldn't say that.

Paul Well, I don't know. I mean, I have met somebody, a couple of people, who I have thought are really good with words, are just words men, who have said I am all right with words. Well, I think I am fishing for a compliment here . . .

Andy Going back to what we were talking about earlier, I am trying to find out whether the conscious or the slight pricking of the bubble that you get, whether that's because you sometimes think that maybe there is just a little bit too much emotion being revealed there and you want to get back to normal.

Paul It might be that. I mean, I personally would say it's not that, it's a fear of being pompous. I mean, I don't like pompous stuff, I don't like pompous things. It worries me if I suddenly hear an interview, and I think, "Oh God", you know, "I was in a serious mood", but taken out of context and put now on a sunny day driving along in the car, "Don't I just sound pompous or something." So that's why I always try, I always like a bit of laughter slung in, or something. It's like at the end of 'Sergeant Pepper', "Within You Without You", George's track. There happen to be these peals of like, uncontrollable laughter, and of course, it was like, "Well look, we'd better not have all that laughter 'cos it spoils this very serious, Indian, Eastern mood of George's." But I mean, George wanted it and stuff, you know, it had to be.

Andy You do the opposite on this album, don't you, and after "Get It" which ends with Carl Perkins, it has a great laugh, a very rich kinda sound, and then you have that little "Be What You See", which is beautiful, a sort of ecclesiastical sound, I thought, very pretty, so you're really doing the opposite then, you're kinda actually going from the ridiculous to the sublime...

Just to questions on some other track – I won't actually go through all of them it's not nessarily interesting – "Take It Away" seems a fairly straight forward, a very straight McCartneyish track, very cheerful, but that is one of the songs that sounds very British, funnily enough.

Paul Well, there were a couple of songs that we ended up recording which Ringo asked me to write at a certain period. I was writing some songs for Ringo and "Take It Away" was in amongst those songs. I thought it would suit *me* better the way it went into the chorus and stuff; I didn't think it was very Ringo.

Andy I like it.

Paul I mean, the chorus I think, was Ringo, the other bits... but that's how that comes to be that kind of track I think, I was right in that sort of direction with Ringo in mind actually.

Andy What tracks did Ringo play on this?

Paul He played on that one, "Take It Away", and he played on another one that we are working on at the moment, which isn't on the first album, so that on that first album I think he is just on "Take It Away".

Andy So Dave Mattacks is doing the rest of the drumming?

Paul No, Steve Gadd.

Andy Yes, on Steve Gadd's tracks I can hear...

Paul I think there is one that might fool you, "Dress Me Up As a Robber". You might think that was Steve Gadd, but it is actually Dave Mattacks anticipating Steve Gadd's arrival in Montserrat. It's my theory, anyway.

Andy "Somebody Who Cares" – that beautiful song, I like that.

Paul I wrote it out one Sunday afternoon. In Montserrat we used to take weekends off just to kinda have some holiday as well as recording, and this Sunday afternoon I was anticipating Steve Gadd's arrival, and Steven and Stanley Clarke were coming in, and I liked the idea of writing something for them coming, you know, so it would be fresh for everyone.

Andy The theme, in as much as I can work out a theme, is the one you have dealt with in quite a lot of songs, isn't it, sort of resignation and optimism, sort of somewhere mixed up.

Paul Somewhere there is someone who is going to take care of things, do you mean? I can't think where I have used it before; I'm sure I have, though.

Andy "Let It Be" is the same, that sort of line of thought.

Paul That's right, faith I suppose you'd call it.

Andy Yeah, I guess so, though faith always sounds much more, sort of organised.

"What's That You're Doing?" is a great track. Just the riff in the title obviously like that, linked together. I wondered whether the title came from the riff, or did you have the title...

Paul It originally just started off with Stevie Wonder jamming – Stevie is an inveterate jammer, as they say – and he was on the Yamaha CS80 synthesiser and started playing.

Andy It sounds like, you know, the way Jimmy Hendrix used to make his guitar say, "Thank you." If you listen you can actually hear the riff saying, "What's that you're doing?"

Paul He's an incredible controller. He started off on the riff and he built most of the song up actually just from a jam.

Andy That's what it sounds like. I got this thing and it moves from Wonderland to McCartneyland, sort of, as the song progresses. It starts off straight, then it sounds as if they chorus, or the middle eight sounds like you.

Paul It's true, actually, yeah.

Andy And then, as it progresses, they actually mesh into one another very well. That will make a good disco track. I mean, when you were recording it, did you think...

Paul It might do, yeah.

Andy It's good to have a disco track. I mean, at one time it used to be people would think, ah... cashing in.

Paul Oh, disco...?

Andy But what's good is that...

Paul If you use the word dancing instead of disco, it sounds a lot better and it's...

Andy I guess now it means something different, but what you have really got is little temples specially built for playing music loud, for people to dance around in a good environment, and it's a shame not to have some tracks that will work in that atmosphere. One of the worst things is that at one time, no one was making interesting disco records, I mean the discos were playing a lot of terrible stuff. I shall look forward to going into a disco one weary night on the next Roxy tour and hearing that, because it will cheer me up.

Paul Yeah, but it's true, there is a lot of really great disco stuff and you know, it has to be disco if it is to work down those clubs – you can get great records that really don't work down those clubs. I remember being at one of those places and one of my kids wanted some punk stuff on. We asked the DJ and he put some on, and it kinda killed it stone dead. Everyone had been leaping up, they all sort of didn't know what to do, you know, it wasn't dancy as they knew it. Then he put YMCA on, and of course, everyone leapt up out of their seats again.

Andy "Here Today" – we've talked about. On "Somebody Who Cares", was that real flute or is it Farelight?

Paul At the beginning, it's a Roland guitar. Incredible, isn't it? It really doesn't sound like guitar at all. At the very beginning, I know it's very flute-like, set in on a Roland guitar, then through a synth thing. Denny Laine has this set-up which clicked in and just happened on that setting. You know, it's great, it really sounds like a flute, more like a flute than a flute!

Andy It does sound great, so that's all the way through.

Paul Oh, no, no, no. Sorry, wait a minute, I am getting confused here. There's a snatch at the beginning, and that's the guitar, that very sort of flute-like flutter at the beginning, but then it's pan pipes, not at great expense. He was here around the corner, you know, the local pan pipe man.

Andy Side two. It's funny, I actually think I like side two better than side one for some...

Paul It's funny, yeah. When we were going home one evening in the car, we had a little cassette of side two (side one wasn't ready for some reason) and we played it. It flows quite nicely.

Andy It has an interesting mixture of things.

Paul It's nice to know once you have heard side one that side two doesn't go down hill. I always feel that side two often goes down hill.

I felt kinda chuffed. I remember coming back in to George and saying, "Look, side two really works, you know, it's good."

Andy "Wanderlust" is in the sort of hiding spot.

Paul It is, isn't it, yeah.

Andy Is that the track you don't want people to listen to, middle of side two?

Paul Yeah, traditional burial place.

Andy "Ballroom Dancing", that's the strongest kinda rocker, isn't it, it has a strong rock 'n' roll feel, it's nice starting the side. It's interesting, 'cos your main roots are rock 'n' roll; I remember your Desert Island Discs selection was 90% rock 'n' roll. I guess it's sort of sublimated in nearly every track you do. But this one is the most out and out rock 'n' roll; it reminds me of a Lieber and Stoller song, the Coasters feel. I don't mean a particular song, it's just got that sort of Coasters thing about it which I quite like. It's got humour in it.

Paul A bit of tongue-in-cheek stuff. I was surprised actually, I thought we were doing more rock 'n' roll.

Andy I think it's there all the time, because...

Paul It's more towards the dancy rather than rock 'n' roll rhythm.

Andy Rock 'n' roll meaning a kind of, I suppose, a 50s feeling. It's all there in lots of other songs, but it's good, it works really well. I like...

Paul Ballroom dancing for me is a sort of childhood dream thing. You know, images, snatches from childhood and then you just tie them all up at the ballroom all the time, you know, as if it was...

Andy You used to go ballroom dancing?...

Paul Almost, it was one of the places to go. Dances were where you went to look for girls.

No, I never actually got really into it and got my own costume and learned any steps, but I remember as a little kid, your Mum would kind of teach you to waltz and stuff, and you would have to...

Andy I never learnt it. I actually came from that generation that didn't ever have to learn even a waltz, it was just that by that time I could go to...

Paul You're trying to say you're younger than me? . . .

Andy By the time I could go to school dances, they would have a combo but they were kinda playing rock 'n' roll.

Paul I used to go with my mate. I remember going with George Harrison quite a bit 'cos we lived locally and we used to take a bus up to a school where they had a dance, and you know, they just dim the lights a bit – a couple of coloured lights – and then it was all a pretty embarrassing evening, really, 'cos we couldn't do any of the dances, the Paul Jones, all the traditional stuff that they did, we didn't know how to do (*and* you always had to pay to get in!) So the only one we knew how to do, both our mothers had taught us how to do in the traditional manner. But you are trying to fool everyone that you are too young to learn, but we know better!

Andy I was such a bad dancer. I came from a whole line of bad dancers; none of my family can dance.

Paul I wasn't exactly Fred Astaire, but it was the idea that you had to do the last waltz, or you would have gone to a dance and not danced, which would be silly, you know, you might as well stay away from the dance. Also the object was to go and try and pick up a girl so you had to get some body contact by the end of the evening or you would just feel cheated.

Andy I think I missed out. I think those dances were great. It's nice now, when you go to something with your parents and it's all older people and yet they can actually get up and glide around the floor and enjoy themselves.

Paul I always look at the way the first couple get up – what do you call them – like the MCs. I remember George's Mum and Dad were that. George's Dad was a bus driver who used to work at Finch Lane Bus Depot, and they were the lead couple. You know, everyone would sit around, have a couple of drinks, the music would come on, and they would get up and walk slap into the middle of the floor and start dancing. And that was the signal that everyone could dance, and I would think, "God, that takes some courage!"

Andy "The Pound is Sinking", that's an interesting song, I am curious about this. Obviously there is sort of pleasure in the words and the rhythms and the idea of it all, the sort of irony...

Paul For me, it's just the funny thing about the pundits day to day giving us an update so that all the people who've got money can gauge it all, like the weather. There is something which sort of amuses me about this constant update of something that is always going to be different, you are never going to be able to put your finger on it, but it just might help, knowing if there is snow on the M6, but generally they make more mistakes than they make correct predictions, it seems to me. You know, the pound is sinking – panic – and then the pound's all right now, and everyone gets back into it. It's a funny idea; I like the idea of all the ants doing what the lead ant tells them, you know, the oracle.

Andy There is someone whose father is a remarkable man. Anyone in particular?

Paul It's not about anyone, no. Sometimes I just get little jumbles of words that sound nice and I haven't even really got a meaning to them, but I know that they're words, and that they have a meaning so I don't really attempt to resolve that...

In this, it's mainly just the ridiculousness, apparent ridiculousness, of the money market – the ups and downs and the indexes and stuff – and then that little bit there that comes in the middle, it's the funny little conversation: I always imagine it like a sort of film where there is one character doing this pound is sinking bit, and explaining all the rest, and there is this little inter-cut scene with this other little bit about "your father is an extraordinary man, but you haven't inherited any of his mannerisms." It's just a bunch of words, it just kinda says something that people say all the time...

Andy There is one little intense bit that I couldn't hear just before it goes back into the end of that section, a screaming bit.

Paul Oh yeah, that's again sort of unrelated, but I mean, there are certain things that I *can* put my finger on and say, "Well that's how *I* think of them", certain things even I can't put my finger on 'cos I don't write them like that. It's like looking at an abstract picture, you know. The fellow painting it kinda says, "What do you think it looks like? Looks like a couch, doesn't it?" But that's only what he sees and he's not saying it *is* a couch, so for me, those are the little random bursts or words that you kinda make up your own meaning on all that stuff if you can hear it.

Andy On "Wanderlust" again, can you remember what you did with the vocal sound in the beginning? It's very interesting, a very strange sort of sound.

Paul I can't really remember what we did to it actually, and I am looking at Geoff our engineer here who is as puzzled as I am. I don't know... I spent a bit of time – I wasn't too happy with how it sounded – so I went back in and sung it a bit differently, and maybe that something, maybe something I was doing... myself, I don't think we really put much of an effect on it.

Andy It sounds... it's a very good sound. I mean, the whole album though, does have a great sound. I imagine that the digital mixing must have helped.

Paul We were pleased with that, yeah. I mean, it was the first time I have mixed digitally, and George Martin and Geoff Emerick wanted to get into it and we experimented, we did it on tape, or, and digital at the same time, and kinda just compared the two, and yeah, we were getting the much cleaner response, you know. So when you figure it's gonna go out down to some worn out old record in a few years' time, we thought we would try and get as clean a kinda signal onto the record as possible.

Andy "Dress Me Up as a Robber" – is that the one you were talking about that sounds Steve Gaddish?

Paul Yes, I think that does sound Steve Gaddish in its rhythm, but it's a kinda Latin thing that Steve would do anyway. We did it in Montserrat where we had different people at different times, you know. Dave Mattacks was there drumming on certain tracks and then we was returned to England and nearly overlapping him was Steve Gadd, to kinda take over. And I think for me, I always say today, I can hear him sort of anticipating Steve's arrival and sort of thinking about this. He plays a bit Steve Gadd-y style, which is nice actually, it makes a nice change for us. It sort of keeps a bit of a continuity rather than it just being everyone's very different, they kind of assimilated a bit to each other, sort of thing.

Andy Are the words anything of great significance?

Paul Dressed up as a robber – the words are just kinda words, they just came about. You can do whatever you like to me, you can call me what you like, but I'll still be what I am; you can dress me up as a sailor, a robber, a soldier, but it really won't matter, I will still be me. If you dress me up as a soldier I will be the little fellow who goes to Northern Ireland and writes a book about the horrors of it – I won't be a soldier really, or you know what I mean, that kind of thought.

Andy And "Ebony & Ivory" is sort of really, quite a simple song, isn't it? Straight forward it says it all, quite straight forward.

Paul I was thinking it would be a good idea to write a second verse and continue the thought. I tried a couple of things, but I just couldn't say anything beyond the bald statement of just the piano analogy and... that was it, you know, black and white notes, you need them to have harmony.

Andy You know – I suppose it's suggested anyway – anything that's about black and white races involves some concept of oppression, or something, 'cos that's our background on it.

Paul Yeah, I think so. You know, I talked to someone originally about doing it and he said, "Well, maybe it wouldn't be a good idea just to sing the song straight, because it would seem just a bit too syrupy, like you know, there is an easy answer to the black and white thing. I mean, also, the trouble with writing a song called "Ebony & Ivory" with such a bit theme is you tend to not also talk about red and yellow, you know, talking about black and white. I mean it's basically a symbol for any racial disharmony.

Andy Is it something you have thought about for a long time?

Paul I don't know. I think being a musician, you don't really seem to have a sort of number with black people, 'cos a lot of them are musicians and there is this understanding...

Andy Also, there is a thing a lot of English kids had in the 50s when they suddenly discovered that rock 'n' roll people were black, 'cos you heard the records and you hadn't really thought about them being black, particularly, though you were always aware that Chuck Berry and Little Richard were black.

Paul Yeah, well I had seen photos of the men when that stuff came out and films like "A Girl Can't Help It" – you saw a lot of them, but it didn't mean black in the kind of civil rights kinda way, it didn't occur. None of that appeared to come into it, mind you, as far as I am concerned. I would never really have been around any great intolerance, as some people have, you know. I have seen it on the housing estate where I used to live. I mean you do all the sort of jokes, I suppose, along with everyone – the prejudice type of jokes – as you would do the Irish or whatever you do.

... Well this is one of the things about it. When I wrote it I thought yeah, nice song, says ebony and ivory. I like the melody and stuff, I thought that would be good that, because it will maybe say something to someone who is going to go on...

Andy It's not always something that has worried you, you have not had a strong feeling that you have got to do something for race...

Paul No, no, not really. So much so that when I wrote it I thought well, I mean, the problem with this is maybe it isn't really necessary, maybe I have missed the boat, it would have been necessary, but then, when we came to record it and stuff, I don't know, you still see a lot of it about and...

Andy Maybe it's good to write a song which isn't like a big complex statement, but a theme for a song and it's not now necessarily something that is going to destroy society or otherwise, but it is still there.

Paul Yeah, I mean, I just think if, in the same way as "All You Need is Love" kinda said, "maybe love is the better policy than hate", it just sort of suggested that, didn't really go an awful lot further. Maybe you can free yourself with this thing called love, maybe it is a good thing, a good force, the same as I think you just kinda suggested that harmony between peoples is a good idea rather than a bad idea, and I strongly believe that anyway; I think it's inevitable anyway. I would just like to hurry it up really.

Andy Had you planned to work with Stevie before you started this album? Was that a long standing sort of thing, you know – "we must do some recording together"?

Paul It had been mentioned. We had been talking about it when we met each other. We said we must do something sometime. I had been sniffing around a bit so when...

Andy ...So then you started thinking about 'Tug of War' and...

Paul Well, "Ebony & Ivory" more than anything. I was bringing songs to George – any ideas that I had – I would give him and see what he thought of them, and that was one of the ideas. I thought, well it would be really good to do it with a black guy and a white guy and really literally sort of just show the feeling that you are trying to get over anyway.

Andy You mentioned he is a great perfectionist to work with anyway...

Paul Stevie? Yeah, very much so...

Andy So once you get an idea, does he then work on it a lot to kinda re-do parts?

Paul He's very helpful, he gets into it, he's very enthusiastic, you know; he's not the kinda fellow who just sits by and lets you do it.

Andy There is a great precision about...

Paul He's competitive, too.

Andy About the tracks he played, you can hear the very precise keyboard.

Paul I love it, you know. I admire that, so it's great for me to be involved in that, that was one of the things, you know. Hewas my first choice for a black vocalist to sing "Ebony & Ivory" with, and he agreed to do it, that was one thing. And then the other thing of him just as a musician, where I think we noticed that the certain ways which we worked were pretty similar: he does albums using just himself or he has done in the past, playing all the instruments, which I have done – one of my little things, too – and certain methods in the studio are pretty similar. We fell in with each other.

Andy Who plays bass on "What's that You're Doing"?

Paul I played bass on it, but there are kinda two basses. There is a CS80 noise, which is like a bass, then I double it up with a real bass.

Andy What tracks did Stanley Clarke play on that?

Paul Stanley plays on "Somebody Who cares" and "The Pound is Sinking".

...I think we can cut now. and "thank you very much".

Andy That's very good, actually, today. I think we have a lot of very interesting things. I think that a lot of the talking about the past seems to come better starting from this album...

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